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ABSTRACT

The socioeconomic contributions of adult learning to community were examined from a social capital perspective. The concepts of human capital and social capital were differentiated, and the relationship between learning, human capital, and social capital was explored. The relevance of social capital in describing the wider benefits of adult learning was illustrated through the examples of a study of the impact of the adult and community education (ACE) sector on communities and society in Victoria, Australia, and a study of a group of African women refugees located in a suburb of a large Australian capital city. The studies documented wider benefits of ACE in the following areas: health; education and learning; employment and quality of working life; time and leisure; command over goods and services; physical environment; social environment; and personal safety. Social capital building was shown to be implicated in effective adult learning in the following ways: (1) social capital is involved in program design, management, and delivery whether it is explicitly recognized as such or not; (2) the processes of drawing on and building social capital are part and parcel of the learning process; and (3) social capital can be a direct or indirect benefit of learning. (Contains 27 references.) (MN)

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Socioeconomic Contributions of Adult Learning to Community: A social capital perspective

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Paper for the conference *Wider Benefits of Learning: Understanding and monitoring the consequences of adult learning*, European Society for Research on the Education of Adults (ESREA), 13–16 September 2001, Lisbon, Portugal

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Socioeconomic Contributions of Adult Learning to Community: A social capital perspective

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As an explanatory concept relating skills and knowledge to economic outcomes, 'human capital' has dominated for decades. Skills and knowledge are certainly central attributes of a learning society, however, given the limited (and usually unsuccessful) use of economy as a proxy for social wellbeing, two outstanding questions about the impact of adult learning on socio-economic wellbeing linger: a. What are the multiple impacts of adult learning on community? b. How do these occur? To answer these questions adequately, the theoretical construct of 'social capital' is proving useful.

This paper examines how it is possible to gauge the impacts of such a nebulous entity as adult learning on diverse socioeconomic domains and it looks at how these impacts occur. Outcomes of learning are discussed against a framework provided by the eight OECD indicators of social wellbeing. Social capital—its networks, trust and shared values—emerges as the missing link in explaining the integrated role of knowledge and identity resources in facilitating adult learning benefits for individuals and society.

Introduction

This paper draws on empirical research to build theory about the impact of adult learning on socio-economic well-being. The argument is that the impact of learning on society is brought about by social capital. The skills and knowledge of 'human capital' are only able to be brought into socio-economic circulation through social means. Effectively, we argue that, far from being a warm and fuzzy feel-good notion, strong social capital is in fact the primary factor in maximising the impact of adult learning on socio-economic well-being. A theoretical position is finally reached in the paper. The theory is that, through the development of trust, networks and shared values, people's and organisations' learning is of benefit both to them and the wider society. The arena of the 'wider society' is illustrated here as the OECD (1982) indicator bands. That is, only through social capital are the skills and knowledge of human capital made available for the benefit of individuals, the communities and regions in which they live, and ultimately the society at large.

We will advance this theoretical position in the following way. First, we will review the relevant literature associated with adult learning and social capital, especially as these two bodies of work intersect. The review includes a representation produced by the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) of how social capital is used and built at the micro level of interaction. This is followed by the description of one study conducted by the Centre on the role of social capital in the production of socioeconomic benefits through adult learning. We conclude with a discussion of the study that draws out the ways in which social capital is implicated in the processes involved in adult learning and its outcomes.

We begin with a brief overview of how human capital and social capital are defined followed by possible explanations of how human capital, social capital and learning are inter-related.

What are human capital and social capital?

Chronologically, human capital is a more mature concept than that of social capital. The notion of humans as capital was introduced in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776/1970) but was not developed until the mid-20th century. Standard definitions describe human capital as the 'ability, skill and knowledge of individuals which is used to produce goods and services' (Bullock, Stallybrass, and Trombley, 1988, p. 106). In recent times human capital has been defined more broadly. The OECD (2001, p. 18) for example, defines human capital as 'the knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being'. Attributes include the physical, emotional and mental health of individuals. Coleman (1988, p. 100) describes it as 'the acquired knowledge, skills, and capabilities that enable persons to act in new ways'.

The notion of social capital is a more recent phenomenon of the late 20th century although the origins of the term have been traced back to Hanifan's (1916) communitarian work. Fundamental to social capital theory is the proposition that networks of relationships are a resource that can facilitate access to other resources of value to individuals or groups for a specific purpose. Portes (1998, online) notes that '[w]hereas economic capital is in people's bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships'. While social capital theory can be traced back to classical sociological theory (Portes 1998; Wall, Ferrazzi & Schryer, 1998), its usefulness in current times lies in highlighting those aspects of social structure, such as the qualities of networks, that lead to economic or social gain for either groups or individuals.

In the last decade, the sociological term 'social capital' has gained popularity in research and social policy literature across the fields of sociology, anthropology, economics, community development, and education. Concern with the apparent dissipation of social cohesion in some communities has arguably contributed to the interest in social capital (e.g., Putnam, 1995, 1999). Terminology such as 'bonding ties' (interactions between members of a group that build and maintain cohesion and solidarity) and 'bridging ties' (interactions external to the group) has entered the discourse around social capital in an attempt to define and understand it (see Gittell & Vidal (1998) for bonding and bridging ties).

At this time no definition of the term has won consensus. Portes (1998, online) notes that 'studies have stretched the concept from a property of individuals and families to a feature of communities, cities and even nations'. Social capital has been viewed as a private good, that is, an asset owned by individuals, and as a public good owned by a group and beneficial to members of that group (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). On the one hand, the term is used to describe the resources that are made available to individuals or groups by virtue of networks and their associated norms and trust. On the other, it has been used to describe the networks themselves. Sometimes the term is used simultaneously to describe both. For some the term 'social capital' implies goodness, that is, there is no such thing as bad social capital. Others disagree and refer to negative social capital or social liability.

More confusion sets in when the metaphorical aspect of the expression, evoked especially by the word 'capital', is further extended. We speak of *building* social capital, *contributing* to social capital and of *investing* in social capital. We talk about *accessing* social capital, *using* and *drawing* on social capital. It seems that social capital can be *accumulated*, *stored* but it

can also be *depleted*. Most importantly, social capital apparently can be *measured* although agreement on how this should be done has not been reached.

Despite the inconsistencies and points of confusion, the notion of social capital persists. In the area of education and training this is due at least in part to the deficiencies of terms such as human capital to adequately explain the processes and outcomes of learning. Of the more recent writers who have been influential in the development of social capital theory such as Bourdieu (1983), Putnam (1993), Coleman (1988, 1990), and Fukuyama (1995), Coleman's work is probably the most cited in the context of learning. Coleman (1988, p. 98) states that:

> [Social capital] is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure.

According to Coleman (1988), there are three main aspects of social relations in which the capital inheres. These are the obligations, expectations, and trust set up within the relationships; the information channels created in the social structure; and the norms and sanctions operating within the collectivity. Trust is one strong indicator of the presence of social capital in a group whether it be an organisation, community, or society in general (Coleman, 1988, 1990). Trust has been identified by most theorists as being both a prerequisite to, and a consequence of, social capital building.

Relationship between learning, human capital and social capital

The connections between social capital, human capital, and learning have not gone unnoticed by scholars of organisations and of learning (see Coleman, 1988; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Hansen, 1999; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Schuller & Field, 1998). For example, Coleman (1988) studied the effect on the formation of human capital of social capital in the family and in the community. Teachman, Paasch, and Carver (1997) in their study explored how social capital mediates the effect of parental financial and human capital on leaving school.

The relationship between social capital and human capital has especially attracted interest by researchers who theorise learning as a social activity. In a discussion of the kinds of social arrangements that best promote lifelong learning, Field and Schuller (1997, p. 17) state:

> Social capital ... treats learning not as a matter of individual acquisition of skills and knowledge, but as a function of identifiable social relationships. It also draws attention to the role of norms and values in the motivation to learn as well as in the acquisition of skills, and the deployment of new know-how.

The relationship between learning, social capital, and human or intellectual capital has been theorised in a number of ways. Here two different but compatible explanations are discussed. One is from Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998), two organisation scholars, and the other is from the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) where adult learning is a major area of research.

Building on Coleman's work, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998, p. 243) define social capital 'as the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from the network of relationships possessed by an individual or social unit'. They identify the attributes of social capital along three dimensions or clusters: the structural, the relational, and the cognitive dimensions. The structural and relational dimensions draw on Granovetter's (1992) network analysis of structural and relational embeddedness. The structural dimension of social capital refers to the 'impersonal linkages between people or units' (p. 244). The relational dimension is the features of personal relationships. These include trust, trustworthiness, norms and sanctions, obligations and expectations, identity

and identification. The third cluster of attributes described as the cognitive dimension refers to shared language, codes, and shared narratives within the organisation.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal begin with the premise that, as with the creation of other resources (Schumpeter, 1934/1961), the creation of new knowledge (that is, learning) involves the processes of combination and exchange. Combination refers to 'combining elements previously unconnected or by developing novel ways of combining elements previously associated' (p. 248) and exchange refers to the exchange of knowledge resources between different parties through social interaction and coactivity.

Nahapiet and Ghoshal then argue that the various elements of social capital—the structural, the cognitive, and the relational—impact on the processes of combination and exchange by affecting the conditions that apply to the creation of new intellectual capital or learning. In summary form, the four conditions are:

- The opportunity must exist to make the combination or exchange.
- The parties involved must have the expectation that there will be value in availing themselves of the opportunity.
- As well as the expectation, the parties involved need to experience the motivation to participate in the interaction leading to the creation of intellectual capital.
- Finally, participation needs to be accompanied with what Nahapiet and Ghoshal call 'combination capability', that is, the capabilities to combine knowledge must exist. These capabilities, they explain, do not only reside in an individual's capability but also in the links across individuals' capabilities.

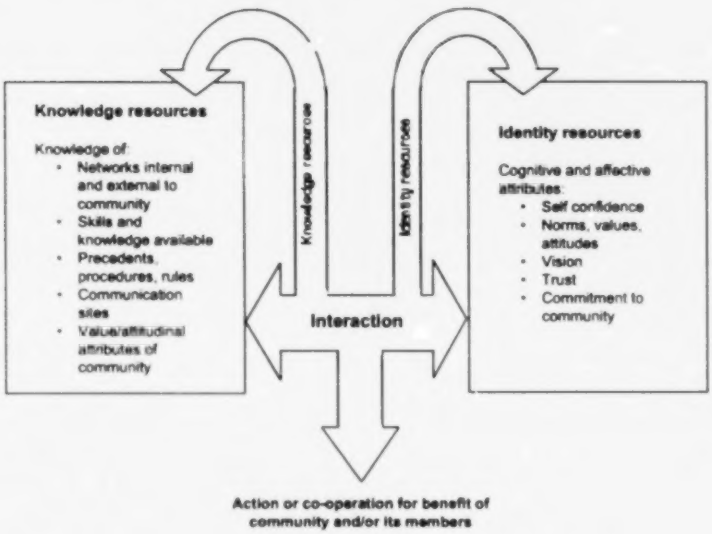
Although Nahapiet and Ghoshal's focus is on how social capital influences the development of intellectual capital, they note that sociological theory (for example, Berger & Luckman, 1966) would suggest that the reverse is also true. Just as social relations affect the amount and kind of intellectual capital circulating in an organisation, the existing knowledge and skills influence the social practices of the organisation including those aspects of social structures that facilitate social capital. It is of critical importance for this paper that Nahapiet and Ghoshal's so-called 'combination capability' represents the feature of learning to do with the human capacity to adapt to change. That is, in the terms of another discipline's research, the point of production of social capital lies in the individual's capabilities as applied *in the links across those individuals' capabilities*.

The coevolution of social and human capital alluded to by Nahapiet and Ghoshal is represented in the CRLRA model (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000) of how social capital is built and used (Figure 1). This model was derived from an extensive empirical study of interactions in three towns in rural Australia between members of local networks which were called 'communities of common purpose'. In this model, social capital is the knowledge and identity resources available to the community for a common purpose. It demonstrates, to use Nahapiet and Ghoshal's term, the exchange and combination of resources between participants at the point where these processes occur, that is, at the point of interaction. From this perspective, therefore, learning occurs when social capital is built, that is, when the set of interactions calls upon existing knowledge and identity resources and adds to them. Changes in knowledge and identity resources i.e., changes in social capital, are indicators of learning.

The model consists of three components: the interaction between participants, the resources potentially available to that interaction, and the desired outcome of the interaction. Where Nahapiet and Goshal begin with the need for the opportunity for the exchange and combination of knowledge to take place, Falk and Kilpatrick begin with a common purpose shared by the participants. The desired outcome is the common purpose that unites and

motivates the network or group (as small as two) to interact. The interaction can be face-to-face but need not be (it can be a phone interaction or by electronic mail); and it can be formal (e.g., a meeting) or non-formal (a chance meeting in the street or corridor). The resources described as knowledge and identity resources are located both within the network and outside it. Knowledge resources are described as the 'common understandings related to knowledge of community, personal, individual and collective information' (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000, p. 99). Identity resources are described as the 'common understandings related to personal, individual and collective identities' (p. 100). Trust is one element included here that features strongly in social capital theory generally. Trust is the social glue, the mutual expectations that bind communities together and 'inheres in the situated, observable and accountable reciprocity of every micro interaction' (p. 104).

Figure 1: CRLRA model of building and using social capital



According to this model, the social capital available to the participants lies within the knowledge resources and the identity resources that are brought to the interaction by the participants individually and collectively. The subset and configuration of these resources used to achieve the desired objective of any specific interaction that contributes to the common purpose constitutes the social capital on that occasion. In all likelihood, a different set of interactions, for a different common purpose say, will draw on a different subset and configuration of available knowledge and identity resources. According to the Falk and Kilpatrick model, the value of the social capital available to the participants in an interaction is determined by two factors: the match between the desired outcome and the knowledge and identity resources available to be brought to the interaction, and second, the nature of the interaction itself. Central to the model is the interaction. The efficacy with which resources are drawn on is determined by the processes that occur within the interaction and the conditions under which it takes place

The model represents the relationship between the social relations (interactions) and the resources brought to those interactions as a dialectic one. According to this model the nature of the interaction potentially changes the resources that store the participants' social capital

just as the resources themselves impact on the nature of the interaction. Neither the social capital nor the social relations through which it is accessed remain static.

Research on social capital and learning carried out by the Centre (e.g., CRLRA, 2000; Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000) suggests that social capital building is enhanced in those interactions that display certain dimensions. One is a chronological dimension called historicity/futuricity and the other is a relational one described as externality. The role of historicity and futuricity is fundamental in the processes that transmit social and cultural norms. The research makes clear how past learning needs to be reconciled with the present, in the context of the knowledge and identity resource of a future gaze or "vision". Externality refers to the relationships that people have with the 'outside world'; that is, the people, ideas, and issues that are outside the 'space' in which they normally operate. Externality is not only about developing and using networks (bridging ties) although that is very important. It is also about identity. It is about *seeing* oneself as a member of the larger community-of-communities that comprise society.

The study that is reported in the next section illustrates the relevance of social capital in describing the wider benefits of adult learning. It also illustrates the relevance of social capital in understanding the learning experiences of adults undertaking training programs.

The study

The study reported here was commissioned by the government of the State of Victoria in Australia and documented in full elsewhere (Falk, Golding and Balatti, 2000). Victoria is about two and half times the size of Portugal with less than half its population. Three quarters of its 4.4 million people live in Melbourne. Indigenous Australians comprise approximately 0.5% of the State's population numbering 22 600. Most Victorians are of British ancestry but after the Second World War, many immigrants settled in Victoria from other European countries such as Italy and Greece. The most recent wave of immigration has been from Southeast Asia in the 1980s.

The research concerned the impact on communities and society through the learning experienced by participants in the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector. ACE is one of the three main education sectors involved in post-schooling education in Australia. The other two are Higher Education, which is principally the domain of Universities, and Vocational Education and Training which is mainly delivered by accredited training providers of which the public Institutes of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) are the largest provider.

The Adult and Community Education sector is arguably more developed in Victoria than in any other State or Territory in Australia. State legislation established a board which supports its development by planning, developing policies, promoting and allocating resources for implementation strategies, and advising the Minister. The State is divided into nine regions and the Regional Councils develop regional and statewide policies and strategies to promote, support, resource and evaluate adult education provision. There are over five hundred providers of ACE throughout Victoria.

The ACE sector in Victoria is community owned and managed. This means that ACE providers are not-for-profit organisations that have voluntary committees of management drawn from the community. Because ACE is a Statewide function regulated from the government's head office for education and training yet constituted via community representation, the Victorian ACE sector is distinctive in the Australian educational landscape.

ACE providers deliver a range of education programs determined by the needs of their local communities. Programs are funded through a number of sources including Commonwealth and State government funding. ACE provides literacy, numeracy and basic education courses; courses in English for people of Non-English speaking background; general courses focussing on basic skills or standards to prepare students for further education courses; courses that qualify students for entry to tertiary institutions; vocational education and training related to employment; and general adult education that includes hobby, recreational and personal development courses. The primary clientele of ACE are people who, for any number of reasons, wish to resume their education or continue it. It especially includes people who are unable or unwilling to access education pathways offered by schools, vocational education and training providers, and universities and people who are unemployed.

The research had two purposes. The first was to investigate the range of individual and community benefits that can be experienced in some of the best ACE programs. Included in this purpose was identifying the ways in which ACE programs contribute to the social capital of the communities within which they operate. The second purpose was to identify some of the more important factors that affect the contribution that ACE makes to the community.

Methodology

Ten programs, each delivered by a different provider, were selected representing all regions of the State for the research project. In this project the term 'program' referred to a course, a series of courses or an ongoing relationship between the ACE provider and the client group that produced planned learning experiences for that group. The process of case selection began with Regional Councils nominating programs showing strong evidence that ACE practice or activity works to:

strengthen existing community networks and create new networks;
develop trust within the community;
foster the development of common or community goals for the common good;
produce transformational experiences for learners, teachers or tutors, the community or a group within the community;
be responsive to local needs by impacting on the whole community.

The ten programs selected for the study satisfied the criteria for effectiveness listed above and were representative of the diversity of ACE programs. Each program targeted one of the following learner groups: unemployed people; youth at risk; migrants of non-English speaking backgrounds; women refugees; rural Indigenous youth; Indigenous aged people; senior citizens; rural women; rural owners and employees of small business; and, lastly, rural community leaders.

Trainers, managers and participants in the programs who were either currently involved or had been involved within the last two years were interviewed by the research team. Community members who had not been involved in the program but who had indirectly experienced some benefits were also interviewed. The learners had been selected for interviews because they had reported benefits from participating in the program. In all, approximately 100 interviews were recorded.

The semi-structured interviews sought information on the nature of the benefits experienced and why they had occurred. Benefits were categorised using the OECD (1982) eight areas of social concern: Health; Education and learning; Employment and the quality of working life; Time and leisure; Command over goods and services; Physical environment; Social

environment and Personal safety. Factors relating to program provision that impacted positively on outcomes were identified.

Findings

Two sets of findings are summarised here. The first concerns the benefits that learners reported from their experience of the ACE programs. The second set of findings concern those elements common to all or most programs that seem to be influential in maximising the benefits derived from ACE.

Table 1 is a selection of the outcomes identified by participants from their learning experiences. The table lists only outcomes in which change in practice is evident in the reports of the respondents. In other words, reported outcomes of the kind 'we learnt about good health' are not included in the list while a response such as 'I have changed my eating habits for the better' is included. This table is not meant to convey the impression that all learning produces benefits in all categories or that the same training program produces the same set of benefits for all its participants. The point of the table is to show that ten of the best examples of training programs delivered in the ACE sector in one state of Australia do produce a wide range of benefits for the participants and, directly or indirectly, for the communities of which they are members.

Not all learning programs produced benefits in all eight areas but all produced benefits in at least three. The program for senior citizens for example produced benefits in five categories. The program offered a variety of courses ranging from general interest courses such as creative writing and activities through the University of the Third Age to classes in cooking for one person and training in careful driving. In addition to the more obvious benefits of acquiring new skills and knowledge (Education and Learning), participation in the program by the elderly folk produced other benefits. Better dietary practices and a decreased sense of isolation and loneliness (Health), better driving (Personal Safety), critical consumerism (Command over goods and services) and engaging in productive or enjoyable activities to fill their days (Time and Leisure) were just some of the wider benefits of learning.

One of the ten programs produced benefits in all eight areas for the participants or for the communities in which they worked. That program offered leadership development to community leaders over a large geographical area dotted with small towns. Increased networking and increased self-confidence were often reported to lead to community action. Evidence of some of the outcomes is found in the following excerpts from two transcripts:

> There are youth development things occurring with the police now in the region that would never have occurred without the linkages that were created within the Program.

And the other:

> I'm opening a chapter of [a professional organisation] in the region. It has the potential to bring together disparate professionals in my industry and hopefully we'll get together in forums and meet. Hopefully it will result in overall improvement in skills and knowledge amongst the professionals here, which will of course benefit the community. Without the confidence I got from the Program, I would never have gone and tapped on the door of the Branch Executive of the Australian [ ] Society.

Table 1: Wider benefits of learning in Adult and Community Education

Category	Outcomes
1. Health	*Improving physical wellbeing* e.g., Improving dietary practices Accessing government funded health checks e.g. breast cancer Decreasing usage of drugs and alcohol Improving physical fitness *Improving psychological wellbeing* e.g., Repairing psychological damage Reducing loneliness and isolation Increasing self-confidence
2. Education and learning	Acquiring credentials Progressing to other formal and informal learning opportunities Learning skills e.g., information technology Making more informed decisions and having more informed views
3. Employment and quality of working life	*Employment* Finding paid employment Finding better employment e.g. better pay, job satisfaction Doing volunteer work e.g., 'giving back' to community *Quality of working life* Improving work practices e.g., safety, satisfaction, productivity
4. Time and leisure	Managing time more effectively Engaging in recreational activity e.g., arts, crafts, sports, hobbies
5. Command over goods and services	Independently accessing public transport and other public services e.g. banking, the law Budgeting more effectively Exercising citizen and consumer rights
6. Physical environment	*Using the physical environment* Interpreting and following road maps and signs *Protecting the physical environment* Recycling waste Using chemical substances correctly Participating in environmental projects e.g., planting trees
7. Social environment	(Re-)experiencing a sense of trust and identification with community and society Interacting more effectively with family members, co-workers and other community members Reuniting with family Using language and communication skills to interact with people outside immediate networks Taking leadership roles in networks Accessing and/or creating opportunities for cultural exchanges Joining and/or establishing formal or informal professional, economic, educational social networks
8. Personal safety	*Taking action to respond to or avoid threat to personal safety* e.g., Living in safe accommodation Decreasing crime activity Driving more safely Applying conflict resolution skills in potentially volatile contexts

The second set of findings concerns the characteristics shared by most or all the programs that were reported to be significant in explaining why participants and the communities they belonged to experienced the kinds of benefits listed above. In the section that follows we list only those characteristics that are the more pertinent to understanding the role of social capital in creating new life options and opportunities through learning. Three sets of characteristics were identified. The first set of characteristics has to do with how a program is set up; the second set identifies the features of the environment in which participants learn and the last set concerns the characteristics of the relationship between the provider and the learner.

A. Design of the program

A1. The program manager uses a community development approach in designing the program. This means calling on existing networks and developing new ones to ensure that there are authentic connections between the program and the community it serves.

A2. The dominant set of values guiding the program includes non-judgmental acceptance of participants; valuing the resources participants bring to the program; and proactive support for the participants in their learning.

A3. Continuity of funding and staffing is recognised as being critical to the success of the program.

A4. It is recognised that learning is a function of time and that people learn at different rates.

B. The program context

B1. The program creates a physically and emotionally safe environment for participants to learn.

B2. Conditions for ongoing opportunities for formal and informal interaction between participants and between participants and staff are ensured.

B3. Language and communication practices successfully embody the values of the program.

B4. Community is created among program participants and staff.

B5. Program creates opportunities for learners to interact with people, situations and systems outside their own 'comfort zone'.

C. Relationship between provider and the learner

C1. The program is a collaborative venture between the staff and the participants.

C2. The relationship between staff and the learner—should the learner desire it—extends beyond the duration of a course, unit or project.

C3. The learner is shown pathways to further learning.

In the following section, we use the case of a group of African women refugees located in a suburb of a large capital city to illustrate more closely the relationship between these characterisitics and the outcomes produced by effective adult learning on social and economic well-being.

The case of the African women's program

Participation in the African women's program contributed to the ability of refugee women, many of whom had been survivors of torture, to relearn to trust people and systems in their new country. It also provided opportunities for them to rebuild their own immediate community and to contribute to Australian society. Coming together to learn English was just the beginning. The program is briefly described here to illustrate the categories of learning outcomes in Table 1 and the characteristics of effective programs listed above.

The program was a collaborative project between a group of refugee women from the Horn of Africa and the ACE provider, in this case, a community centre in Melbourne. The African Women's Project—as it came to be called—had begun with an English as a Second Language course. At the time the research was conducted it was in its third year because it had continued to develop in response to the participants' involvement. In reality, the African Women's Project comprised a number of consecutive programs.

The Project had begun when the African Community Council responded to an invitation by the Community Centre to participate in a government funded English as a Second Language Program in which the approach to learning English would be through story telling. The program was promoted through the African community by the Council and by Community Liaison Officers. The response drew 27 women to the meeting room at the Community Centre. They were young and old with education levels ranging from university qualified women to women with no formal education at all. Some women had never learnt to read and write but spoke several languages fluently and almost no one spoke any English at all. It also drew women who carried with them the legacy of their countries' warring histories. Strong distrust had developed between them, and between them and their civic processes and governance. Before meeting in that room on that first day, there had been no social contact between many of the women even though they lived in the same geographical area, some for up to ten years. Even the children did not speak to one another.

With the assistance of interpreters, the manager and tutors worked with the disparate group to reach a common and attainable goal regarding the story telling. The women all wanted to document stories but they had to decide which stories should be told. Some wanted war stories, others did not. This took many weeks of discussion and arguing before a decision was made. But the process brought the group together and many benefits began to flow from this.

In the first year the participants agreed to document, in English, cultural stories surrounding childhood, adolescence and marriage. Tutors, with the help of interpreters, recorded the stories. Additional support that the women may have needed from other human services providers such as trauma counsellors was arranged. Much of the work went on at the Centre but work was also done in the women's homes.

Extreme care was taken to ensure that the story-tellers retained absolute control over their stories right through to the published product. Meticulous checking was done to ensure that the women were happy with their stories. The women's confidence grew when they heard their stories read back to them. They would suggest corrections or even make complete changes. At the end of the year, a booklet called 'Stories by Women from the Horn of Africa' was produced and officially launched at a gathering of 200 people. Videos and photos were also produced and displayed. Hundreds of copies were distributed to schools, community centres, TAFE Institutes, universities, neighbourhood houses and community agencies. Some of the stories were put on a Web site. This had required the community centre to seek the collaboration of other community groups that had computers and expertise and to then seek assistance from the African Community Council to arrange transport.

As work on the stories was taking place other exchanges were occurring. Where previously there had been no social contact between women from the different countries, now they visited each other, supported each other, attended each other's weddings and had other celebrations together. There were African Nights at which the tutors were also invited. The women set up a stall at the International Women's Day celebrations in a nearby suburb. Community groups began to invite the women to meet with them. A Community Arts Centre approached the women to transform their stories into theatre. Schools contacted the Centre wanting to display the Project. Whenever it was displayed there had been follow up phone calls including from other government authorities seeking advice on how to set up similar projects in their ethnic communities.

In the second year, the women who stayed in the Project decided to document some of their war related stories. These were mainly the older women because the younger ones had gained enough confidence to move on to other learning pathways for which, in many ways, the Project had been the catalyst. The manager had invited the local university of technology to meet with the Centre and the women to discuss either existing pathways or pathways that needed to be created. As a result, bridging courses were set up and many of the women began to follow pathways leading to university studies or jobs. Some had already secured jobs. A second outcome of meeting with the university was the eventual establishment by the university of an advisory committee to identify education, training and employment needs in the African community, and where necessary, to develop appropriate courses.

In the third year, the formal story telling had been suspended and a group of the women were continuing with language classes. These women had just recently acquired enough confidence to join classes that included people of other nationalities. Until then, they had been comfortable only with other Horn of Africans and would have refused to go to mixed classes.

The women acknowledged that it was taking them a long time to learn English but they believed they had made substantial progress. Those with children or grandchildren at school felt they needed to learn English to strengthen their connections with their own flesh and blood. They feared the young were slipping away from them. Mastering the language also meant having more control over their lives. They shopped independently; they did their own banking; they managed public transport. Mobility was very important. 'We go everywhere now', they explained.

At the time of the interviews, the African Women's Project was on the eve of a new phase. Funding had been won to have the African Women's Project Roadshow visit other community centres and libraries in the region. The women would be showing their book, photos and video and doing readings of their stories. While the logistics sounded complicated and time-consuming, the manager explained the importance of continuing with the project:

> It follows on from the original desires of the women. They want to have that information shared, to get the information out there. Particularly in schools. And in other places where the women themselves or their children use the services and facilities. They want people to know what it means to have come from the Horn of Africa. That's part of being united.

Participation in the African Women's Project has produced transformations of identity. Through working together on common goals, trust and connections have been established. Friendships have been forged that bridge different cultures and overcome hostile histories. Redefining themselves as Horn of Africans has contributed to solidarity and commonality. The sense of community developed through the Project has led to the necessary confidence and self-esteem for these women to reach out to other communities in the mainstream of

Australian society. Some have sought jobs, others learning pathways and others simply the opportunity to make connections and share their stories.

Discussion

The eight categories used to list the outcomes of learning earlier in the Findings section served the purpose of illustrating how the benefits of the learning adults undertake can go beyond the usually cited ones of individual satisfaction, course completion and employment. While the benefits listed were those that the participants personally experienced in their lives, it takes little effort to infer the benefits that the wider community gains as a result. The benefits go well beyond cost savings from reduced demand on health services, law enforcement and social welfare services. Economic and social contributions from more learned employees and citizens engaging in family and social life, in paid labour, volunteer work, (re-)development of trust in society and civic participation can also flow from effective adult learning.

The more important purpose that the list serves for this paper is to provide the platform for a discussion of how the benefits of learning are more adequately identified and more comprehensively understood through the use of the notion of social capital. In this section we first review the benefits from the perspective of identifying how social capital is implicated. Some benefits seem to be dependent predominantly on learners acquiring the capacity to *draw on* social capital in the community while others seem to be *building* social capital in the community. We then analyse how and why the characteristics of effective programs listed later in the findings produce rich learning experiences for the participants and for their communities. We do this by using the CRLRA model of building and using social capital and the concepts concerning social capital already explained.

Drawing on social capital is a benefit of learning

If social capital refers to the set of useful resources available to individuals or groups of individuals by virtue of engaging in the appropriate social interactions, then engaging in those interactions is the key to drawing on social capital. In the study referred to here many of the benefits from learning involved the participants having acquired the capacity to access resources that they had not been able to previously. For some learners joining recreational clubs in their town instead of staying at home, watching television and feeling isolated became possible only when they had developed the confidence that they could approach those groups, be accepted and feel they could belong. As another example, the leadership program, already cited, provided participants with a web of networks that allowed them to draw on resources not previously available to them. One leader from the business sector explains:

> The people I have met and the contacts I can make now compared to before is amazing. There are lots of Chief Executive Officers' doors I can go and tap on, senior management people in all business sectors. Even if I don't know them, I know someone who can give me an introduction or contact...We're thinking of expanding our business. So I called up some alumni in that area who straight away gave me five to six names of people I needed to meet.

Clearly, learners' capacity to draw on social capital is not entirely determined by their own skills, knowledge, and identity resources and even connections. Being able and willing to engage in interactions that draw on social capital is also determined by the norms of the group or network in which the desired social capital circulates. The program described in some detail here concerning the refugee women is a case in point. Fifty years ago the norms and values of Australian mainstream society would have prevented women from non-English speaking backgrounds making the kinds of contacts that the African women in this case successfully achieved.

Building social capital is a benefit of learning

Building social capital denotes that, through particular processes and conditions, the 'quantum' and/or 'quality' of the social capital available to a community changes from being less to more. Changes in trust levels, in the number of networks operating in a community, and in the size of network memberships are ways of identifying whether an intervention, in this case, adult learning through Adult Education and Community programs, makes a difference to the social capital of a community. The CRLRA model described earlier would suggest that changes in the level and kind of interaction or activity between actors within and between networks are other indicators of social capital building. It is the nature and frequency of interactions that impacts on social capital by influencing the kinds of knowledge and identity resources made available or generated for achieving the actors' common purpose.

A feature common across all ten cases in the ACE study was the initial site of social capital production for the learners. In all cases, it was within the small community comprising the participants and staff involved in the program. The programs aimed at creating the conditions that encouraged individuals to develop the building blocks required for social capital to grow. These building blocks are trust, norms and relationships and are discussed in more detail later.

The experiences reported in this study reveal strong evidence that adult learning can build social capital in the wider community. All the outcomes listed in the Social Environment category in Table 1 are explicit examples of learner activity—during the program or as a result of the program—that generated social capital through the creation of new social relations in the community that produced positive outcomes.

The study also showed that the Adult and Community Education sector produces social capital at another level. ACE contributes to the development of social capital by, first, calling on existing networks, and second, generating new networks or connections in designing and implementing its programs. As community owned and community-based providers, the success of the programs is very dependent on sharing resources and on a shared ownership of the programs by the communities they service.

When the ACE provider calls upon its existing networks, it is in fact strengthening those networks by activating them. Relationships are reaffirmed, common values are reinforced, and a new project or goal of an individual member in that network provides the impetus for the network to again work together for the common good. As an example, in the African Women's Project, existing networks with community groups and agencies were 'called in' both in the implementation and ongoing running of the program.

Sometimes, however, the ACE provider is the catalyst, agent, trigger or facilitator for the development of new networks or connections whose outcomes can go beyond those resulting from the initial intent of the people involved. Examples are numerous. The learning pathways in the African Womens' program is only one example. In another program ACE activity linked elderly indigenous people with the younger generation. In another leadership networks across a relatively uncohesive region of the State were expanded and used, while yet in another, industry training networks were developed and drawn on.

Building social capital and drawing on social capital are related processes

In the discussion so far we have referred to the two processes of *building* and *drawing on* social capital as if they were independent of each other and even, one could infer, opposing actions. This has been done only as a means of focussing on different dimensions of the role

of social capital in learning and in its benefits. Doing so has been useful also because the learner groups in the ten cases were, in the main, marginalised relative to other groups in the same geographic community or relative to their counterparts in the more populated parts of the State. Given their marginalised status, they did not have access to many of the resources—financial, physical, intellectual, social—that members of the mainstream groups had by virtue of being members of those groups. That is, the social capital delivered explicit social and economic benefits to those involved. Making a distinction between drawing on and building social capital helped identify those participant benefits that involved developing the capability to draw on social capital that had not been previously available to them but had been available to others.

Building and drawing on social capital however, are not two discrete processes. The CRLRA model presented earlier illustrates the theoretical parameters of how building and using social capital can be simultaneously occurring processes *in the one set of interactions*. It is the nature of the interaction that determines whether by drawing on social capital, the social capital available to the actors is being built or depleted.

The interconnectedness of the two processes—drawing on and building social capital—is well illustrated in the refugee program described in the last section and was encapsulated in the program manager's quotation that ended the description. The processes of drawing on and building social capital are engaged at a number of different points in the series of interactions referred to in the quote but only two are identified explicitly here. The women's increased confidence and self-efficacy, improved language skills and their developing sense of identity as Australians allows them firstly, to respond positively to the invitation from mainstream communities to meet with them. Secondly, it allows them to take up the staff members' offer to facilitate such meetings *(drawing on social capital)*. This, in turn, allows them to access the previously inaccessible domains of the mainstream as legitimate and valued participants with resources to offer. Through the ensuing cultural exchanges between the women and the non-African people they meet, both parties may leave the interaction with richer knowledge resources about the other's lifeworlds and increased identity resources by virtue of successfully holding a conversation with someone so different from oneself *(building social capital)*.

Social capital building is a condition of learning

The final important aspect of the role of social capital in adult learning is to note that using and building social capital are not only possible *outcomes of learning*, but they are also *processes by which learning occurs*. They are the processes involved in a learner being both willing and able to interact in new ways, in new contexts and with new people. We contend that most, if not all, the outcomes listed in the Table 1 required participants to engage in interactions that developed the stores of knowledge and identity resources available to them in ways that permitted them to *act* differently from their norm. Interactions can only occur through social relations, connections, and relationships with others. The group of senior citizens in one program for example, exercised their rights to walk on safe footpaths by collaboratively developing and submitting a formal complaint to the local government authority that resulted in the obstructions being removed (Command over goods and services). They were able to do so because through the program they had built up the necessary confidence and sense of self-worth to reconstruct their personal identities as 'citizens who are prepared and willing to take action' (identity resources). This provided the impetus for them to find out how to go about writing such a letter (knowledge resources) and so built the collective capacity to act on similar matters in the future.

The important question for adult educators concerns the ways in which education and training programs maximise the opportunities for creating the kind of social capital that is

useful in generating the desired learning opportunities for its participants. The specific study that has been referred to in this paper and other research that has been carried out by CRLRA (e.g., Falk and Kilpatrick 2000) reveal that effective programs provide an environment containing opportunities for social capital building to occur for their learners.

Earlier in this paper the program characteristics which produced effective learning outcomes in the ACE study were identified. They pertained to the design of the program, the context in which participants engaged in learning and the relationship between the staff and the learner. Here those characteristics are couched in the language of social capital theory.

Forming bonding ties: Programs sensitive to the role of social capital in learning aim to transform the group of participants and staff members into a community that has learning as its common purpose. The set of norms and values operating in the community promote a psychologically and physically safe environment where learners develop the trust, self-efficacy and confidence necessary to try new ways of thinking and acting. Staff members are role models. Opportunities for informal as well as formal interactions between community members are encouraged because it is known that the building blocks of community—trust, reciprocity, common purpose, historicity and futuricity—come from the cumulative effect of many apparently inconsequential 'informal' interactions as well as from formal activity. For most participants membership of the learning community provides a short-term scaffolding that helps them acquire new and/or more effective memberships of communities outside the program. For others, membership needs to be longer, in some cases even years. While the identity transformation that occurs from experiencing bonding ties within a community of this kind are essential to learning, bonding ties are not a sufficient condition for learning by themselves, as the next section shows.

Forming bridging ties: Program staff create and facilitate opportunities for learners to interact with groups, situations and contexts outside those of their immediate communities. This may involve the program provider on behalf of the learners to make connections with existing networks or it may require the development of new networks. It may involve setting up or facilitating opportunities for connecting learners and the outside world through interaction with people or through artefacts such as computers and books. It may merely involve supporting learners in their own initiatives. Bridging ties is one element that promotes *externality* in how one sees oneself in relation to the world outside the immediate 'comfort zone' and hence promotes the self-efficacy, confidence and capacity to bridge from the immediate to other networks and activities.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to explain and illustrate the role that social capital can have in adult learning. Social capital building is implicated in effective adult learning in three most important ways:

1. Social capital is involved in program design, management, and delivery whether it is explicitly recognised as such or not. Its explicit recognition facilitates superior planning and delivery.
2. The processes of drawing on and building social capital are part and parcel of the learning process.
3. Social capital can be a direct or indirect benefit of learning.

The relationship between social capital and the quality of learning experiences and learning outcomes needs further empirical research and theorising. The OECD (2001, p. 70) has called for more research 'clarifying the links between human and social capital to explore how social networks can promote the education of individuals and how education can

promote social capital'. Although barely alluded to in this paper the role of the state in enabling adult learning provision that accounts for social capital also requires more research. Another important area for research is learning how our current understandings of social capital impact on the inclusion of minority or marginalised groups in dominant group social processes.

Despite the current lack of clarity associated with the concept of social capital, it has nevertheless begun transforming the way we understand and value human interaction, productivity, and especially learning. At the very least, the notion of social capital draws our attention to the social dimensions of human endeavour. This year the OECD published a report entitled *The Well-being of Nations: The role of human and social capital*. In the 18th century Adam Smith the great Scottish philosopher, social theorist and economist published his most influential book *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/1970). While that book was a total philosophy of society, its theory on the purely economic aspects of human life has been taken up at the expense of its social commentary. One cannot help but speculate that in the beginning of the 21st century, there are telling signs that this major oversight in the understanding of human endeavour is being addressed, at least in part, through social capital theory.

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